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## ETUC SUPPORTS TUNISIA

03 Ocotber 2011

**Bernadette Ségal, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), visited Tunisia on 29-30 September, meeting trade union, employers' association, Government and EU Embassy representatives in support of Tunisia's ground-breaking moves towards democracy.**



European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]  
 Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

The key role of trade unions in the ongoing process of change and reform in the country was underlined at a meeting with the General Secretary of the Tunisian General Trade Union (UGTT), Abdesselam Jrad. Meetings also took place with members of the regional UGTT union in Ben Arous, including members of the women's and youth committees who also stressed the need for democratic, tolerant, and inclusive renewal in Tunisia. After meetings with the Minister of social affairs, the EU Ambassador and the new President of the employers' association, UTICA, Bernadette Ségal underlined the relevance of Tunisian developments as a major reference for the Arab world and the responsibility of the European Union to keep the process on the track, to promote economic growth and employment, and to fight youth unemployment and poverty.

She welcomed the efforts of the EU-Tunisia Task Force that had met just prior to her visit under the co-Presidency of the EU High representative, Catherine Ashton, while asking that the social partners, the DG Employment of the EU Commission and the Tunisian Social Affairs ministry should be fully involved in order to develop and to stabilise the social dimension in the context of economic recovery.

Bernadette Ségal said: "It is insufficient to hold global consultations on occasion. Social partners should be considered as partners and essential actors, particularly in the context of negotiations that are envisaged on establishing an 'advanced status' relationship between Tunisia and the EU". She reiterated the demand of the ETUC to install at the EU embassies in the Arab region Attachés for Social Affairs as an instrument to strengthen the Social Dialogue. She invited the UGTT and UTICA to hold a joint presentation on the Tunisian perspective early in 2012 in Brussels and she welcomed the readiness of the Tunisian social partners to participate actively in a regional campaign "Social Partners fight corruption". At the end of her visit the ETUC signed a protocol of cooperation with the Maghreb regional trade union association Trade Union Confederation of Arab Magreb Workers (USTMA), including ETUC support to the solidarity action of USTMA with Libyan workers and new trade unions.

*The ETUC exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 83 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.*

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